



DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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To: Newsroom Directors and Assignment Editors

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It's National Weights and Measure's Week!

Do you shop for groceries? Do you buy fuel? Are you in the market for new carpet? At least half of all consumer transactions involve some sort of weighing, measuring, or counting. Imagine that if every time you went to the grocery store, stopped for gasoline, or purchased home heating oil or propane, you had to bring along scales and other measuring devices to make certain that you received your fair share for each purchase based on weight, volume, quantity or price. Thanks to some 3,000 state and local weights and measures officials nationwide, consumers and businesses are spared this nightmare.

This week, (February 28 – March 4) we recognize the important service to the community performed by State and local weights and measures officials across the nation. These men and women help ensure that consumers get what they pay for and businesses do not give product away as a result of inaccurate measuring equipment. The officials also make sure that individuals who sell products and services by weight or measure follow Federal, State, and local laws.

Nationally, more than \$4.5 trillion in annual sales of products and services is impacted by weight and measure laws. A little error here and a little error there can add up to a big loss overall. The National Conference of Weights and Measures, a professional organization, estimates that an error of slightly more than 1 tablespoon per 5 gallons at the gas pump equals a charge of \$125 million annually that, depending on the direction of the error, is borne either by consumers or retailers.

In Delaware, if you drive a car, heat your home, buy packaged meat, weigh fresh produce at the grocery store, etc., a Delaware Department of Agriculture (DDA) employee has served you. DDA's Weights and Measures Section employees inspect scales, gas pumps, home fuel delivery vehicles, propane dealers, milk meters, wire-and-cordage measuring devices, taximeters, parking meters, much more. According to Michael Scuse, Delaware Secretary of Agriculture, "They are out there every business day protecting us from fraud; making sure we are buying the weight, count, or volume of the product that the label indicates, and that product scanners are accurate. I am very proud of their accomplishments."

Equity in the marketplace has a long history in our nation:

- Our founding fathers recognized the critical role that uniform measurement standards and procedures for verifying weight, volume, length or count play in ensuring fairness and maintaining trust. On March 2, 1799, then president John Adams signed the first federal weights and measures law.
- In 1901, the National Institute of Standards & Technology (NIST) was established as a Federal Agency.
- DDA's Weights and Measures Program was established in 1964.

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